

WASHINGTON, DC -- Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (D-Lakewood) welcomed today's passage of the Head Start for School Readiness Act, by a vote of 381-36, which renews and extends the Head Start program. Rep. Linda Sánchez served on the conference committee that shaped the final version of this legislation. Once approved by the Senate, the bill will go to the White House for signature by the president.

"Head start is a program that is near and dear to my heart," said Congresswoman Sánchez, who serves on the Education and Labor Committee. "My entire family, including my sister Loretta--the first Head start graduate to serve in Congress--has benefited greatly from Head Start's comprehensive program. This bipartisan legislation includes some necessary improvements to Head Start and goes a long way toward helping more children start kindergarten healthy and ready to learn."

Rep. Sánchez helped ensure that important priorities in the House bill, including the protection of parental input and participation through Parent Policy Councils (PPCs), survived the conference. Earlier this year, Rep. Sánchez met with constituents, including Head Start parents, and with the National Head Start Association, regarding the importance of the PPCs. PPCs not only allow parents to have a voice in their children's education, but they also help teach parents leadership and advocacy skills they can transfer to other settings, becoming active and involved citizens. Working with like-minded allies in the House, Representative Sánchez helped ensure the survival of the PPCs in the final bill.

The final version of the legislation ends inappropriate testing of 4-year olds, improves teacher quality, makes all Head Start centers accountable for delivering high quality services, and creates a new funding formula that prioritizes expansion for Head Start centers that serve migrant and seasonal workers, that are located on tribal lands, and that serve children ages 0-3, when interventions can be even more meaningful.

Head Start was established in 1965 to help prepare low-income children to succeed in school and in life by providing comprehensive services including not just early education, but health and nutrition services, to children and their parents.

Representatives Sánchez and Howard "Buck" McKeon were the only Southern Californians among the 40 Representatives and Senators who served on the conference committee.